

This issue acts as a collection of materials and reflections on and about the artistic-academic symposium *sharing/learning: methods of the collective in art, research and activism*, which took place on June 28th and 29th, 2019, at (and in cooperation with) District \* School without Center. In formats including round tables, workshops, and participatory performances, the event brought together artists, scholars, and activists - who work collectively or research collectivity - to probe and question different ways of (en)acting together. The online journal presents an index of the event, with essays, reports, photographs, transcriptions and videos that offer insights into the respective methods, concerns and contexts of the authors.

Edited by Juana Awad and Irina Raskin.

Issue #9 of wissenderkuenste.de acts as a collection of materials and reflections on and about the artistic-academic symposium *sharing/learning: methods of the collective in art, research and activism*. This symposium took place on June 28th and 29th, 2019 (at and in cooperation with) District \* School without Center. It was organized by Juana Awad, Julian Bauer, Maja Figge, Elsa Guily, Verena Melgarejo Weinandt and Irina Raskin as part of the DFG-Graduiertenkolleg "Das Wissen der Künste" at the Berlin University of the Arts. Our invited speakers and participants consisted mainly of collectives (or members of collectives) with whom we gathered to practice different ways of (en)acting together. Foregrounding the understanding of the symposium as an assembly on the one hand, and the performativity of the methods on the other, the gathering was structured through three different formats: round tables, workshops and participatory performances - each initiating particular arrangements and means for doing, thinking and feeling together. The symposium did not aim at presenting research *about* methods of the collective, but rather at probing various forms of engaging with and in collectivity.

das  
Wissen  
der  
Künste

Artistic-Academic Symposium  
of the DFG-Graduiertenkolleg  
»Das Wissen der Künste«  
at / in cooperation with District\* School Without Center

methods  
of the collective  
in art, research  
and activism

28.  
29. 6. 2019

Elif Çiğdem Artan  
Selda Asal / Apartment Project  
Ulrike Bergermann  
Clusterduck  
Pédra Costa  
Nuray Demir  
District\* School Without Center  
Ulrike Hamann / Kotti & Co  
Timo Herbst + Irina Kaldrack  
Suza Husse  
Grupo Oito  
Serhat Karakayali  
Andrea Caroline Keppler  
Anika Lachnitt / AWO Theaterlinge  
Friederike Landau  
Spolka Collective  
Ferdiansyah Thajib / KUNCI

teil  
en/  
lernen:  
Methoden des Kollektiven  
in Kunst, Wissenschaft  
und Aktivismus

Fig. 1.  
Online announcement  
Design: Jenny Baese. Courtesy: DFG-Graduiertenkolleg "Das Wissen der Künste"

Certainly within the framework of this online publication, the practices of 'sharing' and 'learning' are enacted differently than during the symposium, but we hold onto its notion of assembly. In this way this online journal is driven by the effort to initiate a gathering of reflections and impulses; to become a medium for different modes of collective acts-thoughts-expressions-articulations; to recall and collect enduring physical traces, memories and artefacts, which occurred or were made collectively in the course of the two days. Therefore, the single contributions to this journal, while partaking in the documentation of the symposium, sometimes exceed it. The authors' reports account for a persistent engagement and struggle with their particular methods, concerns and living conditions - partially by giving us insights into their practical knowledge(s), partially by addressing the limits of traceability, mediation and understanding.

<b>Friday Freitag 28.6.</b>	<b>Saturday Samstag 29.6.</b>
<p><b>10:00</b> arrival and registration Ankommen und Anmeldung</p> <p><b>10:30</b> welcome and introduction Begrüßung und Einführung Barbara Gronau + concept team Konzeptteam</p> <p><b>11:00</b> round table: assembling/disseminating – versammeln/ verteilen Elif Cigdem Artan (sociologist, museologist, curator Soziologin, Museologin, Kuratorin) Ulrike Bergermann (media theorist Medienwissenschaftlerin) Serhat Karakayali (sociologist Soziologe)</p> <p><b>12:30</b> lunch Mittagessen</p> <p><b>14:00</b> workshops – Kollektive Zeit(en)reise – eine Probe mit den Theater- lingen mit Anika Lachnitt (Theaterwissenschaftlerin, Aktivistin) / AWO Theaterlinge – Reinventing the Political Compass: How to increase digital self-awareness in the age of Social Media with Francesca Del Bono (designer, curator), Noel David Nicolaus (researcher, curator), Tommaso Cappelletti (designer, videomaker) / Clusterduck Collective – cooking, playing, sharing with Pêdra Costa (performance artist, urban anthropologist)</p> <p><b>17:00</b> coffee break Kaffeepause</p> <p><b>17:30</b> round table: instituting/fleeing Suza Husse (curator, researcher, writer) and Andrea Caroline Keppler (curator) / District* School Without Center Friederike Landau (urban sociologist, political theorist) Ferdiansyah Thajib (researcher, community educator) / District* School Without Center + KUNCI</p> <p><b>19:00</b> eating, playing, sharing with Pêdra Costa</p> <p><b>21:00</b> end</p>	<p><b>10:30</b> arrival and registration Ankommen und Anmeldung</p> <p><b>11:00</b> round table: commoning/communing Selda Asal (artist) / Apartment Project Ulrike Hammann (sociologist, postcolonial theorist, urban activist) / Kotti &amp; Co Zuzana Tabáčková (architect, urban planner) and Zuzana Révészová (cultural sociologist) / Spolka Collective</p> <p><b>12:30</b> lunch Mittagessen</p> <p><b>14:00</b> workshops – The Practice of Resistance with Grupo Oito (dance collective) – Das Politische und das Gestische mit Irina Kaldrack (Medienwissenschaftlerin) und Timo Herbst (Künstler) – Spaces of Collectivity with Spolka Collective (architects, urbanists and sociologists)</p> <p><b>17:00</b> coffee break Kaffeepause</p> <p><b>17:30</b> Club of Im_Possibilities mit Nuray Demir (Künstlerin, Kuratorin) / District* School Without Center</p> <p><b>19:00</b> end</p>
	<p>in cooperation with in Kooperation mit <b>DISTRICT</b></p> <p>with the support of Mit dankenswerter Unterstützung  Universität der Kluge Berlin</p> <p><b>DFG</b> Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft</p>
<p><b>Fig. 2.</b> Program Design: Jenny Baese. Courtesy: DFG-Graduiertenkolleg “Das Wissen der Künste”</p>	

### About the contributions

In this edition we present twelve contributions, each one corresponding to one session in the program, as well as a reflection from an individual perspective about the space and the proceedings. We have chosen to arrange the contributions within the publication according to the chronological order in which each program point took place. Consequently, the publication begins with the introductory words by the organizing team, which presented the central concerns and considerations with regards to the conception of the symposium, but also took some time to go through the more pragmatic instructions about the arrangement of the space, as well as to credit the persons and organizations that enabled the event. By publishing the script of the welcome note in its entirety, this contribution sets the tone for an edition, which attends to the performative and infrastructural as much as the discursive.

Conceptually, the symposium was organized through three central questions, which we chose to address as round tables. In them, we approached the tensions, collisions and cross-pollination arising when pairing concepts, which we considered fundamental in the practice of collectivity: assembling and disseminating, instituting and fleeing, as well as commoning and communing. The transcriptions of the roundtables document the discussions:

The sociologist Serhat Karakayali and two members of the Clusterduck collective, Noel David Nicolaus and Björn Heerssen, came to word in the round table *assembling/disseminating*, which focused on protest as collective practice against the background of the interplay between media and infrastructures.<sup>1</sup>

District \* School without Center, a queer-feminist art and cultural center in Berlin and our partner in the endeavor, was at the time in a process of evaluating and reorganizing its working structures. The round table *instituting/fleeing* gave space to its members Andrea Caroline Keppler and Ferdiansyah Thajib along with urban sociologist Friederike Landau to reflect on their process and delve into the relationships between institutions and collectives, as well as into experiences with institutional critique and oppositional practices.

In the round table *commoning/communing* Ulrike Hamann of the neighbourhood initiative Kotti & Co, Zuzana Tabačková of Spolka collective and the art critic Erden Kosova, who collaborates with the SiS collective, embarked on a conversation about collective engagements in the city, asking which forms of acting together could do justice to a relational understanding of the commons.

By providing transcriptions for all three round tables, the very different conceptual undertakings as well as the different participatory methods of each one can be recognized.

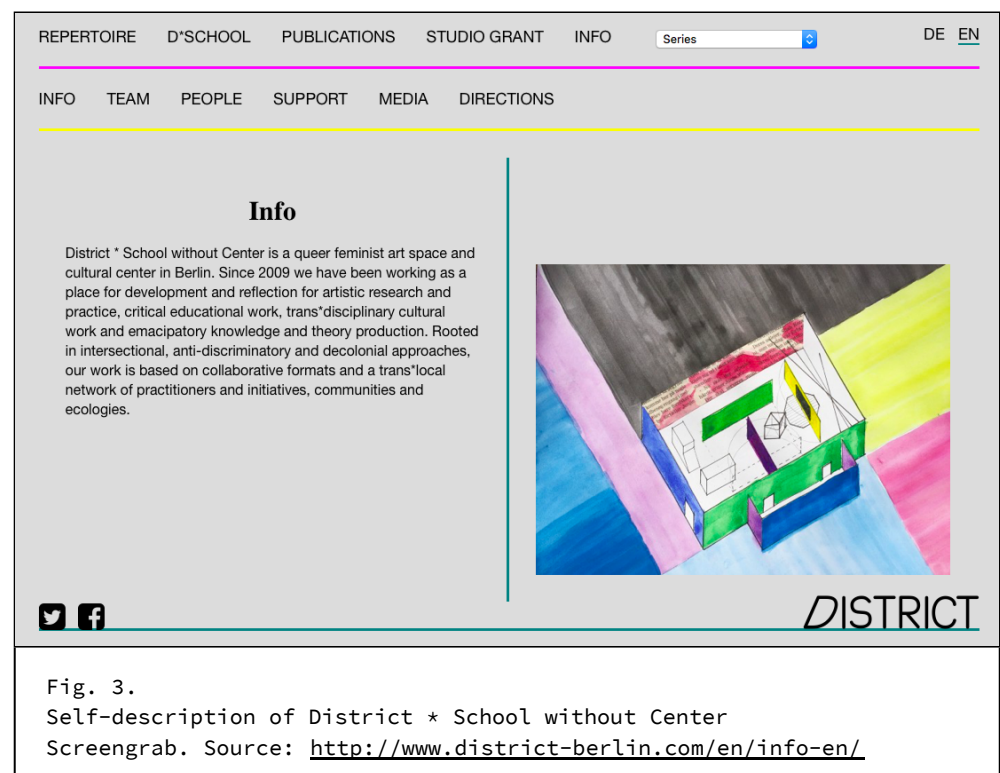


Fig. 3.  
Self-description of District \* School without Center  
Screengrab. Source: <http://www.district-berlin.com/en/info-en/>

The second guiding principle of the symposium was its character as a space for collective practice. Recognizing the many possibilities of acting together, practitioners of several disciplines (i.e. theatre, dance, digital media, urbanism, among others) were invited to enable participatory workshops. Their contributions to this journal take different routes and formats: some look back to describe moments in the way in which memory, with its gaps, can allow; others take up the central questions in new directions; and others reflect upon the collective endeavour anew. In this way, fragmentary traces come together into a scaffold referencing the what, the how and the why of the encounters.

During the symposium Anika Lachnitt and the Theaterlinge from AWO Fanclub Neukölln directed the workshop *Kollektive Zeit(en)reise - eine Probe mit den Theaterlingen [Collective Journey through Time(s) - a Rehearsal with the Theaterlinge]*, where they invited the attendees to partake in the exercises of the group and demonstrated how collectivity is enacted within their practices of developing, rehearsing and staging different material. For this journal, Theaterlinge decided to develop a text collectively, however due to the ongoing pandemic crisis, this process has been delayed and the group shares with us their video *Superheroes\*Heroines*.



For the symposium, Clusterduck conceived the workshop *Reinventing the Political Compass: How to Increase Digital Self Awareness in the Age of Social Media*, which explored how digital infrastructures and modalities of online behavior interrelate. For this publication, Clusterduck reconsiders their practices as a collective that situates itself between Digital Art and activism by revisiting the contradictions they find themselves embedded in.

Within the context of coming together, food also took a central role. After guiding a group during one complete afternoon in the preparation of, and interaction with the food we were all going to consume later together, Pêdra Costa reflects on anthropophagy, anthropoemy, sensual experience and learning as a bodily process.

The photo-essay by Fritz Schlütter focuses on the details: on those apparently unimportant objects that when together not only demarcate the space, but more so reflect a character, an intention, and will ultimately embody the memories of the ephemeral.

After guiding the workshop *The Practice of Resistance* in which trust was built and activated through movement and awareness, Grupo Oito contributes to this publication, reminding us about how short we still come, when trying to expand our notion of a 'we', and who does and does not belong to it; a central question, which traversed many of the sessions.

Irina Kaldrack und Timo Herbst review their lecture performance and exhibition *G20* - part of the multiyear project "The Entanglement between Gesture, Media and Politics" - in which the question of interdisciplinary collaboration takes center stage: how is it possible to create together, when each one is anchored and framed by the knowledge-frameworks of their own practice? What processes support a common and communal undertaking? What methods lead to what engagement? And how to reach beyond the limits and expectations of the individual to create and theorize as a group?

In the workshop *Spaces of Collectivity* the Spolka collective introduced their method of mapping as a means to negotiate individual experiences and the social constitution of space, while acknowledging the role of language in any collective act of space-making. The contribution traces the development of the workshop, including resulting maps sketched by the participants, and reflects on how the methods followed relate to Spolka's wider work.

Closing the issue is the photo documentation of *Club of Im\_Possibilities*, a participatory performance led by Nuray Demir, in which we came together one last time. Rather than seeking for a summary or conclusion of the two days, the happening's final setting re-addressed the 'collective' by inviting the participants to create a mural commemorating the names of those, who have enabled each one to inhabit their own space.

In editing this issue, we aim to create a micro-archive of snapshots, voices, thoughts and communal undertakings, to promote the circulation of references, and engage in the potential of their enduring unfolding.

We would like to thank all authors for their contributions, as well as Marieke Grenzebach for her support in making this issue available online.

Juana Awad and Irina Raskin

Berlin, January 2021

- 1 In this framework, we would like to acknowledge the research practices of sociologist, museologist and curator Elif Çiğdem Artan, and media theorist Ulrike Bergermann, who were invited to the round table *assembling/disseminating*, participating in its preparatory meetings, but who were unfortunately prevented to partake in the event due to unforeseen situations.

Clusterduck Collective  
Serhat Karakayali  
Irina Raskin  
Juana Awad  
“sharing/learning” audience/participants

What are recent examples of practices in which ‘assembling’ and ‘disseminating’ reconfigure agencies, resources, affects and information to give rise to new forms of collectivities? This round table brings together Björn Heerssen and Noel David Nicolaus from the interdisciplinary collective Clusterduck, and sociologist Serhat Karakayali to ask about the relationships and interdependencies between ‘assembling’ and ‘disseminating’ as constitutive mechanisms in processes of collectivization. How do agencies, resources, affects and information elevate processes of creating collective feelings? Together we discuss how ‘assembling’ and ‘disseminating’ take shape in each example, leading to different forms of collectivities; what practicable mechanisms, interfaces and infrastructures come into play; and how do these two instances approach possibilities of collective inter-action in terms of ‘sharing’ and ‘learning’.

Transcription of the Round Table *assembling/disseminating*

With

Björn Heerssen (designer, conceptor), Noel David Nicolaus (researcher, curator) / Clusterduck Collective  
Serhat Karakayali (sociologist)

Moderated by  
Irina Raskin

In English

On 28.06.2019

During the symposium *sharing/learning: methods of the collective in art, research and activism* by the DFG-Graduiertenkolleg “Das Wissen der Künste” in cooperation with / at District \* School without Center

Editors’ note: This text is a transcription of an audio recording of a symposium, which took place over one year ago, and which was not conceived to be published in this form – although the decision to document the event was made beforehand. The arrangement of the audio documentation privileges the spoken word. Since the recording device was plugged into the mixing console, the microphones functioned simultaneously as an amplifying and a recording system. Thus, the microphones not only decisively co-shaped the proceedings of that very event, but also its remains. In this way the technical apparatus conditioned how the event was (not) captured and provided a scale for closeness-distance.

In order to make this transcription more easily accessible for a reading

mode that is akin to languages of the written word, we have made some adjustments to grammar and syntax. However we decided to maintain the speaking tone by leaving in colloquialisms, as well as referencing recorded actions in the space (which we have marked in italics and square parenthesis). The time stamps appearing in the text give a sense of the duration of events, and the moments in which persons speak at the same time. In order to preserve the safety and the closeness, which developed during the symposium, we have anonymized the audience/participants and omitted some references in comments or presentations.



Fig. 1.  
During the round table *assembling/disseminating*  
Photo: Fritz Schlüter. Courtesy: DFG-Graduiertenkolleg “Das Wissen der Künste”

#00:29:26-2#

Irina Raskin (Irina): Hello once again. We will now continue with our first round *tableassembling/disseminating*. And maybe... once again, a short introduction... or welcome and “thank you” to Serhat, Noel and Björn for sharing their material and their work with us, and for giving an input to the round table. This is how it’s going to be structured: So, we first will hear an input from Clusterduck Collective. Here we have on behalf of the Clusterduck collective, Björn and Noel. They will talk about “memes as means” [*laughs*], but also give us a short introduction into memes. And they also will give a workshop after our lunch break from 2pm on, today. So, if anyone hasn’t decided yet, where to go and is triggered by the input can join us later on. And sociologist Serhat Karakayali, who is mainly interested in social movements, activism and research on regimes of migration, will talk about *the spirit of Gezi*, a term that arose - and that is maybe also more a phenomenon, a feeling - during the uprising in Istanbul. Unfortunately, not only Ulrike Bergermann and Elif Çiğdem Artan can’t join us at the round table here, but also my colleague Juana Awad, which is really sad because she engaged a lot in the organization, conception not only of this round table, but also in the whole symposium.

So, with these terms ‘assembling’, ‘disseminating’ we suggest that these are the premises of processes of collectivization - they are constitutive mechanisms for it. They interrelate, and mutually depend on each other. So, we will focus on investigating the infrastructures, embodiments in media that either maintain or prevent ways of assembling and disseminating, but also take into consideration their correlation to

agency. And... ja... do you feel ready to start? Cool.



Fig. 2.

Irina Raskin, Serhat Karakayali, Noel David Nicolaus, Björn Heerssen  
(from left to right)

Photo: Maximilian Haas. Courtesy: DFG-Graduiertenkolleg "Das Wissen der Künste"

#00:32:29-8#

[From the distance] Noel David Nicolaus (Noel): Can I use this one?

[From the distance] Irina: Sure, you can use this one.

#00:32:34-2#

Noel: So, first of all, thanks to Irina and Elsa for inviting us and to District for hosting us, and to all the people of the Graduiertenkolleg, who helped us in organizing this. We are Clusterduck and we are... by our own definition, a collective working at the crossroads. I think that in its definition every collective has either intersections or crossroads in its self-description... Of course art and research and design. Basically one could say. I don't know... I was trying to elaborate some of the things that had been said in the introduction and some aspects I can definitely relate to from my own experience for the past two years, since we started doing this. So, one is for example, the aspect of temporal disparity: how much time each member of a collective can invest, and how this affects the internal dynamics of the collective. And another aspect, for sure, is also how the collective kind of develops its own agency that almost feels sometimes detached from the individual agency of the members composing it. So, I guess we spend a lot of time talking about our own experience as a collective, but actually what we are going to talk about today is memes, mostly. So we're going to talk about internet memes. I guess most people are familiar with internet memes, but we are also gonna have a short introduction, because there are different levels of knowledge on this. It's a topic that we kind of slid into... almost casually. We started to develop an interest in it, because one aspect was for sure that memes can be seen in many ways; they can be seen also as subculture. So they are an aspect of, and are very present in certain digital subcultures - one could say - also in certain social media platforms, but not only.

But memes can also be many other things besides a subculture. We had the feeling that in the public... mainstream perception, there was a very superficial understanding of what memes are about - so that they are often laughed about. I mean, they are seen as jokes basically... viral jokes or something. That is the most superficial knowledge that most people agree on. It's the funny images that you share on social media and that get viral somehow. But this perception has shifted significantly in the past two years at least. One could say that the most important event that contributed to that was the election of Trump as president [of the United States of America], because this sparked a lot of interpretation about the role of the so called alt-right culture in getting Trump elected, about the role of the alt-right in cultural wars in the States. And memes were a very important part in the alt-right subculture and in the election of Trump, one could say. So today, we are gonna try to see these four aspects.



Fig. 3.  
Noel David Nicolaus presenting  
Photo: Maximilian Haas. Courtesy: DFG-Graduiertenkolleg "Das Wissen der Künste"

One of our interpretations and attempts at interpreting memes was to suggest that memes can be seen as a way to enable collective action in digital context, but not only. So as a start, we just give a general introduction on memes and for this I would hand over to Björn.

#00:36:47-6#

#00:36:48-3#

Björn Heerssen (Björn): Hello! As a general thing, I think we should start to look at the word meme and where it comes from, because meme comes from the Greek word "mimema", which actually means something that is interpreted and at the same time it combines with the word gene.





Fig. 4.  
 Memes that question what a meme is  
 Part of Clusterduck's slide presentation

So it's kind of an interpretation that gets passed on: There is a subject and people are interpreting it differently and that's how a meme evolves over time. It's also really important that a meme always changes when passing on.

In the second definition from *know your meme*: content that's only shared, which has not changed or evolved while being passed on to others, is viral content, and not a meme. That's really important for memes, because a lot of people mix those two meanings. They are just different. Yeah, what makes a meme a meme is the repetition and the remixing of the same joke.



Fig. 5.  
 Exemplifying repetition and remixing as principles of memes  
 Part of Clusterduck's slide presentation

So for example, it's actually the same base just getting passed on in different ways. This is a really typical format that maybe a lot of you have seen before or not [laughs]. It can evolve in a lot of different ways, actually. It can get passed on in the template version; it can get passed on with the meaning itself, with the content that's in it. And with that, we already come to the next thing: what you need to understand a meme.



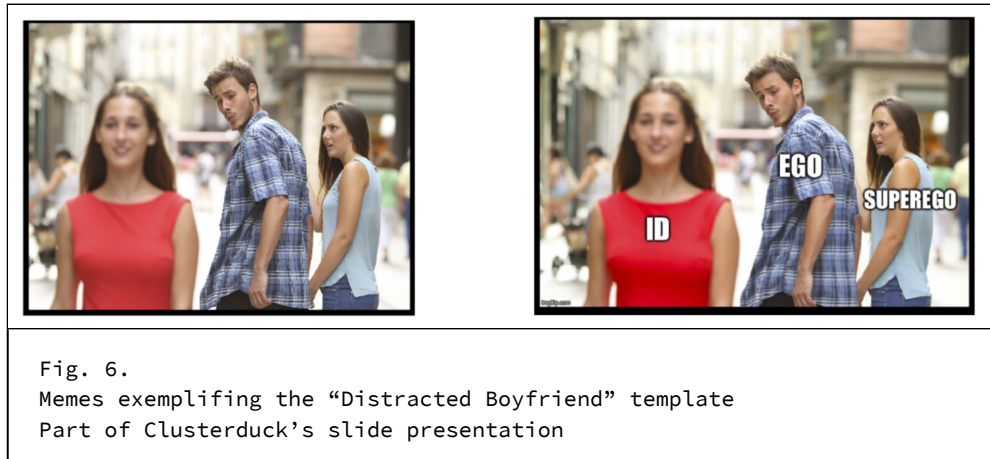


Fig. 6.  
 Memes exemplifying the “Distracted Boyfriend” template  
 Part of Clusterduck’s slide presentation

And it’s on one hand, the template: it’s the base or structure of it, so for example something like this we can always fill in... the pattern that is already existing. And on the other hand, it’s to know the reference: to know what does it imply, what does it try to target, and what joke does it try to make in a whole scene of things. These reference parts are really important, because there are just so many and in this way a meme gets really confusing, because you have to know so many things to get all the jokes. And I think that’s a big part for us, why we are so interested in memes, because once you’re in that language you want to know everything, you want to understand every joke, basically, and for that you have to know a lot of stuff and then you just get sucked into the limbo of meme. [To Noel] You want to continue?

[laughing]

#00:39:22-6#

#00:39:23-5#

Noel: So, basically the slide before was just to show a tiny fraction of the ways in which the memes have been used politically also - that’s when memes were being taken seriously. And that’s why nowadays, we can see not only corporations, but also politicians trying to appropriate memes or meme subculture. And interestingly, one of the newest examples is the primary campaign by [Andrew] Yang. He’s a democrat in the States and he is trying to do what in meme subculture is called “forcing memes“. So he has a team that is very skilled at presenting certain visual contents as spontaneous. They want to give the media the idea that there is a very strong youth culture backing Yang as a candidate. Actually, it’s his communication team that is putting these memes in the right spots, but it’s kind of picking up on the mainstream media. So that’s the interesting thing, that many observers still have many difficulties interpreting, differentiating “genuine memes” (if we want to call them this way, although it’s not a definition I would agree on) from so called “forced memes” (memes that are created for a certain purpose, which can be summarized as manipulating some form of collective agency). And that’s what interested us as a collective, that’s why we got interested in the aspect of how memes can basically be seen also as a media properly. For example like radio or cinema in the ‘30s, I would say that, memes in themselves are not reactionary or rightwing. I would just say that, unfortunately, reactionary forces have been faster at understanding how they work and how to use them. (...) The meaning is always contested... everyone is trying to somehow bring the meaning, the interpretation of the meme to his position so to say. And what we try to do, our way to enter into this situation was a project called #MEMEPROPAGANDA - already in its title we wanted to stress this aspect of memes as an instrument for propaganda, which is - not at least for us - a negative thing, it’s just acknowledging that they can be used in this way, that they have that potential.



Fig. 7.  
 #MEMEPROPAGANDA announcement  
 Part of Clusterduck's slide presentation

We just wanted to clarify this and give people more insight about how they can use this language; that they should try to understand this language and appropriate it, and take it seriously, so that they can also use it for their own advantage or for purposes, which are different from selling products or putting forward reactionary ideas.

So, what we did in the project was articulated in two parts. The first part: we invited a group of selected artists, who drew posters inspired from classic propaganda posters. We asked them to make posters that were close to the meme subculture and then we invited people, basically, to use the posters in demonstrations... as a way to state a message in themselves, but it was also the way to invite people to participate in the second part of the exhibition, which consisted of creating an open board, which was modeled after 4chan. 4chan is one of the most famous online communities - some claim the most influential, when it comes to meme subculture. But, we felt, it wasn't right to go on 4chan and do something there. Also because we probably wouldn't have been allowed... for sure we wouldn't have been allowed. But we thought it would be interesting to try to recreate the same ecosystem, so that people could go there and create memes - as a meme think tank, as a way to think about a way to create memes that were as powerful as the memes that we had seen the right was using in the so called "great meme war". For those who haven't heard the expression "great meme war", this is how people, who identify with meme subculture call the period from the primaries to the election of Trump. There was a cultural war going on in the meme scene, online, and it was won by Trump's supporters, as you may have guessed. And this event, which is actually made up of many sub-events - which we don't have time to recall now - is what we recall as the "great meme war", "the first great meme war". And we had the feeling that we needed to understand why this war was lost and what was missing. And one thing, we felt was missing, was the understanding of the mechanisms behind meme production and how memes could be used. So that was the result of #MEMEPROPAGANDA.



Fig. 8.  
 Memes traveling as posters as part of #MEMEPROPAGANDA  
 Part of Clusterduck's slide presentation

Like, people actually... printed out the posters, so, they were seen in Paris, for example, they were seen in Florence in Italy, in Great Britain, in Russia, in many different places. And this leads us to now. Actually, we are trying to follow up on this experience by getting deeper into the topic. And one thing we notice, for example, is memes as means of production.

What do we mean by this? That basically, we know that social media platforms are places where value is produced. I mean when we post content, it's not a free service that is given to us - most of us have understood this. We pay with our data - that's one aspect. And of course every time we post content, we produce value that is exploited by the platform. So basically what we found out is that, what was happening on Instagram, was something interesting for us, since memetic culture was changing in interesting ways. Because memes have been always seen as something that comes from collective action without authorship. But last year Tumbler, as you may have known, banned adult content to get the app back on the App Store. And this caused what we can call an exodus of meme artists from Tumbler to Instagram and it made a phenomenon visible, that was already present before, but now it became really visible: there are also what we could call meme artists. I would say, the difference is the same as between graffiti artists and street artists. So on one side, you have a scene that is... very suspicious of commercialization and the white cube and all these kinds of situations. And on the other, you have a scene that is more conscious about the value of the images it produces and tries to deal with this aspect. And this was very present on Instagram. So you have memers like for example Renaissance Man. Renaissance Man was among the artists we invited to #MEMEPROPAGANDA, who have joined together.

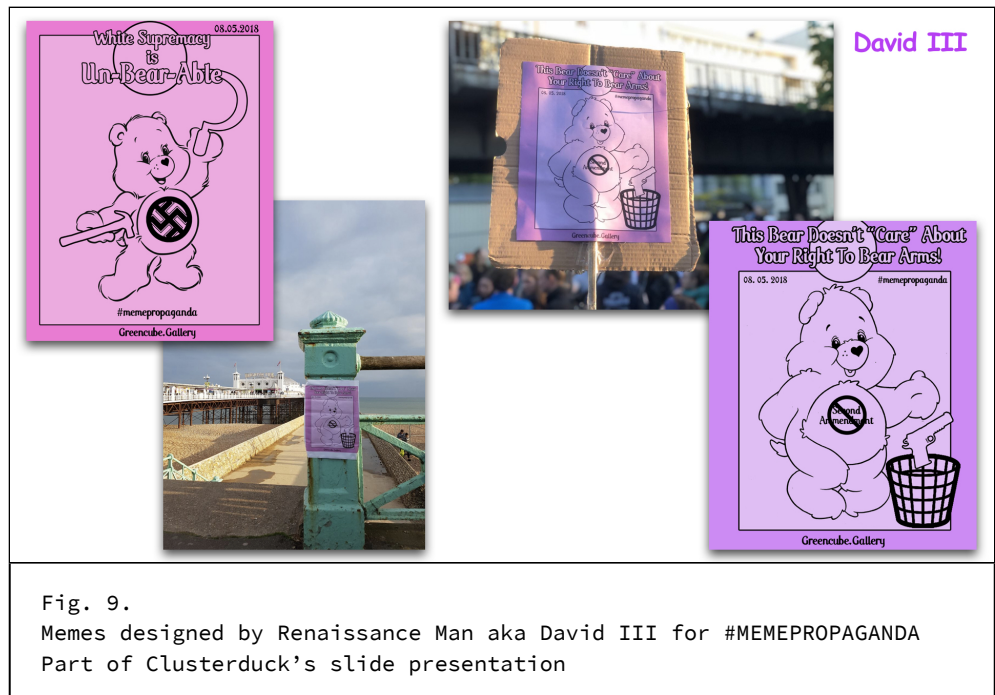


Fig. 9.  
 Memes designed by Renaissance Man aka David III for #MEMEPROPAGANDA  
 Part of Clusterduck's slide presentation

Yeah, sorry, we have to jump this, again... [Referring to the slide show] They started a meme union. This is a thing that happened about two months ago. It started from a single post and this post was picked up and became viral. People started to really try to unionize all the people that were producing this kind of content. You have a website, you have this logo, which of course recalls classic unionist movements. The problem that we see with this is that they are trying to replicate mechanisms that worked for 20th's century work organizations in the 21st century, on social media platforms. And this is not working because the value produced is completely different. They tried to organize strikes; they even partially succeeded in doing this. So the idea is that you stop producing, posting content or doing anything for a certain amount of days.

What happened already two years ago... we had something similar to that [strike] on Facebook already. This is not the first time this happens that memers try to organize. So, on Facebook we had this group [referring to the slide show]. You had a looooot of pages going on strike at the same time, stop posting content for three days. They had a reach of - I think - 20 millions, so you would think: "Oh, ok, this kind of made an impact." But of course we know Facebook has over a billion members. It doesn't have an impact on Facebook, because the traffic will just be redirected to other content and it doesn't affect Facebook in any way. But still it's an interesting example, they managed to organize all these pages and do this event.

And one other event is that - we can see that at the next slide - they started mocking Zuckerberg because people were getting their pages reported and this is when mainstream media took notice of this so-called weird Facebook. *Weird Facebook* is that part of Facebook that is basically not used the way that Zuckerberg intends you to use it: so, with your face on, and putting your personal details, and telling what you're doing with your day and blablabla. But instantly people post really weird content; they use anonymous identities, aliases. And of course Facebook tried to crack down on these pages; they tried to close them and ban them. So there was a conflict that erupted. And as a reaction the *weird Facebook* started reporting Zuckerberg's profile, and mocking Zuckerberg in all possible ways. But I think the important aspect behind this is actually, I think, that we are just at the beginning of a process that hopefully will lead to something like a rising awareness of the creative class - or however you want to call this; it's a very disputed topic. I think one of the best definitions came from McKenzie Wark. He called it the "hacker class". So basically, in the interpretation of McKenzie, hackers are not just people, who develop and write codes, and so on, but hackers are all people, who through the manipulation of information, create value. So probably, all of us in this room could be seen as

hackers: artists are hackers, people who work in the creative industries are hackers. And McKenzie's argument is that basically the current conflict is between the victorious class, which controls the memes by which information is spread. So Zuckerberg would be a representative of the victorious class, very clearly. But also... okay, I have to stop. But I hope you got an idea, where this is leading to... just the next slide, and then I close.

'Cause I think the interesting aspect is that all the conflicts become more understandable, if you read them within the arising working conflicts in the platform economy. So you have the writers, you have workers at companies like Google or Uber, and I think if you read this kind of conflict within that framework, it makes more sense and we can go in the right direction. So thank you.

#00:52:12-5#

#00:52:12-7#

[Applause]

#00:52:24-4#

Irina: So, thank you so much. Maybe we take the time, during... switching... off the presentations to ask questions. In the audience, if there are some terms that aren't so familiar... or questions of understanding...? There will be a wider discussion, room, space and time for wider discussion in the end.

#00:52:56-9#

#00:52:54-0#

Audience member: I wanted to ask if you can show later on... [Voice inaudible/not captured by the recording]

Noel [from the distance]: If there is enough time, sure, yes.

Audience member [from the distance]: Thank you.

#00:53:12-0#

Irina: So, this was a wish to see the content that had slipped out of the presentation. Ok, if there aren't any pragmatic questions, I would hand over to Serhat.

[Noises in the distance]

Irina [from the distance]: Wir können auch hier aufrücken.

Serhat [from the distance]: Ok...

#00:53:39-0#

#00:53:39-2#

Serhat Karakayali (Serhat): So, thank you again for having me here today. I will talk today about what you can see here in the title; about the weird experience I had myself a couple of years ago. This event, it feels like ages ago but it took place in 2013, so six years ago. I will just start from how we were pulled in. This makes sense to me because of the presentation that you had [addressing Clusterduck]. It started in 2013, I was in Frankfurt and joined the Blockupy events there. And I was terribly bored and disappointed from what was going on and I was checking my Facebook account and what I saw was something I didn't experience up to then. A lot of people I was friends with made very, very, long, long statements; not just sharing stuff with a few words but really... like a diary... you know, when people have a diary and they write a page. People were really reflective, sharing their feelings, sharing their experiences, and that kind of struck me as something... Apparently, that is a sign for something going on. We knew that there were protests; we were seeing it on the news. There was this park; the park was occupied, but then suddenly, these posts were becoming really weird and unusual. And so



I felt that what these people were sharing... I think afterwards that it was an experience of contagion, because what I was reading did something to me. It affected me in such a way that I booked a flight, called my partner, who was at the other end of the map and said to her: "Listen, we have to go, we have to be there." Because apparently something different than... it's not just a protest, that's something else. So we booked, both of us booked flights, and we went there and then we participated in this event.

This is a talk about both of my experiences as a researcher doing fieldwork on social movements, and protest, and political atmospheres, but at the same time being so involved that I realized later, that it is really difficult to share this experience as a researcher, because it's this kind of experience that is similar to being on a trip, on a mushroom trip. You can't possibly explain to someone what this is, if you don't have the experience yourself. And the transcendental or metaphysical level that these kinds of events bring with them, is something difficult to share particularly in an academic environment. So I - [laughs] - I found myself in academic conferences, where I had to talk about the events and try to be more distanced to my own experiences than I actually was. And it was very difficult, because the enchantment, the transcendental feeling that you have to be in such a collective moment - where you feel everything is possible and everything can emerge from this situation, and everything is going very fast - this is a unique singular experience and this is why I also felt that I needed to be there, to see how such a thing can be possible. And we just realized that by thinking it through, talking to people, looking at the material again - and we came up with a couple of dimensions that make an assembly a special event. Not just, you know, 20 tents put up, and a kitchen and then, you know, speeches, and demonstrations. Apparently, that's not about that. So we called one of the papers [referring to the paper *The Spirit of Gezi: The Recomposition of Political Subjectivities in Turkey*], we wrote afterwards, Özge [Yaka] and I - Özge can't be here today but we did that together. So imagine she is here, she is just invisible. One of the dimensions - we called it: the infrastructure of an assembly - and what we mean by this is that you not only need stuff. You need technical stuff, but there is something of an infrastructure of a certain... a pattern of practices.



Fig. 10.  
Serhat Karakayali presenting  
Maximilian Haas. Courtesy: DFG-Graduiertenkolleg "Das Wissen der Künste"

And here we come to the idea of sharing - of doing things together... not

only in the realm of... going to a demonstration, sharing the same worldview, sharing the same slogan, but on this intersection between the political and the everyday life. So what was particularly important, I think, in the assembly situation is sharing stuff, all kinds of stuff. People were bringing stuff from home. People, who were not the typical participants in such an event (mothers, aunties, neighbors)... people brought food. So this was one of the very important experiences. Even on the flight to that place, the flight attendants in the plane just by accident found out, where we were going, because we had that medicine with us - the stuff that you put on your face against teargas - and they were asking us "where are you going?" and when we said that we were going to Gezi Park, they just gave us this bag full of sandwiches [*laughter somewhere in the audience*] to share in the park. And people were sending stuff by post and by delivery services. There were huge piles of food coming from everywhere. And this was just the first thing you see. There were all kinds of sharing practices, doing stuff together, cleaning up the place. All kinds of professions having their own stances, etc. So I think that one of the important aspects was this kind of practices and another one - and here starts the presentation-

[SLIDE]<sup>1</sup>

was that really, that's a meme [*laughs, jokingly*]. [*Aside*] It's not? Please. [*Laughter*] I mean, okay, this is six years ago, maybe it is pre-meme-culture, I don't know. [*Laughter from the audience*] It's a meme, definitely, thanks [*laughs*]. So the idea is that here, one of the other aspects, we were talking about and we tried to make sense of: to understand why there is such an interesting atmosphere that did one thing..

[SLIDE]<sup>2</sup>

... What was the cause of that event? The cause of this event was saving a park - a common place, a place that belongs to no one and to everyone. And a place that was actually not used by a lot of people. If you knew this place, it's not a place where you would see a bunch of people all the time. If you would do a survey with all the participants at the Gezi Park, probably 5 percent had ever been there. But being a common, abstract cause - a common -, it allowed for a lot of causes, again, to be there. And what was very apparent was that who dominated politically and in terms of representation were the so-called minorities, minority groups, trans people, queer people, ethnic minorities. So, those who were visible on the ground were not the classical socialist, communist groups with their banners, but more so new social movement types... ecologist movements for example. What was interesting about this, was that these groups were capable of bridging... the differences... the distance - the typical distance that you would expect from a Kemalist group, for instance, which is a nationalist social-democratic youth group and a gay group, for example. Or you can see a hooligan group and feminists acting together. I mean, one of the things that we experienced, and that was really stunning to me: On the first days you have hooligan groups doing graffiti with misogynistic expressions or slogans. Feminists would go to them and approach them: "Listen, you can't do this. It's wrong." And I think one of the main reasons why this worked out was that they were able to say: "We are here with you. We are here together. We are in this together and you can't talk like this." I was really surprised that on the next day - and that's maybe exaggerated, but it was very fast - you never saw the slogans again and the graffiti changed. And this is what I mean with emergence, with transformation, with the speed, the rapidity with which things could appear and change. And this had to do with, I think, humor, with a certain attitude of not taking yourself too seriously. I think that was one of the practices that allowed people actually to deal with different attitudes, with different political practices, with different experiences of other groups.

[SLIDE]<sup>3</sup>

And I think the ultimate expression of that attitude was that even the actual, not enemies, but the actual opponents at the situation - people, who were actually beating you up or throwing teargas at you... [*Referring to the image*]



] That was a symbolic act, too. There was an Islamic holiday, when you share or you bring to your neighbors or to your families a certain type of cake. This was the cake brought to police officers on these days... it was during these two days. And I think what you see in that act of... peace or... non-antagonism kind of represents the common attitude and atmosphere throughout the whole camp and the whole assembly.

[SLIDE]<sup>4</sup>

So this is, for example, a way to deal with one of those contradictions in the assembly. An assembly, where you have Kemalist groups. And their main slogan is (it still exists): "We are the soldiers of Mustafa Kemal." Who is Mustafa Kemal? Mustafa Kemal is the actual name of Atatürk. So "We are the soldiers of Mustafa Kemal" means "We fight in the line of Kemalism, of the founder of the nation" etc., etc. - it can mean a lot of different things. And what people did was to mock this in a nice way. Mustafa Keser is something like Heino or Howard Carpendale. This kind of singer, very popular but a little bit cheesy.

The other thing is: What kind of humor is this? It was basically represented by self-deprecation and this is actually the definition of humor against the joke, against irony, against other types of being funny. Humor is about you making jokes about yourself and not about other people.

[SLIDE]<sup>5</sup>

And if you look at these kinds of... [*Referring to the image*]... it has... not graffiti... it's another term, when you do it with a pen... [*voices in the audience*] it's tagging. It was very popular to relate to the experience of suffering by making fun of it. Not in a manly way... not in a way that involves attacking the other person.

[SLIDE]<sup>6</sup>

So, what this one [*referring to the image*] does, is really difficult to translate. It refers to the typical invitation to a wedding, to a wedding party... it's a revolution party, everybody is invited.

[SLIDE]<sup>7</sup>

And this is "teargas beautifies" [*referring to the image*]. So this was sprayed on this MAC... some of you might know it, it's a very famous cosmetic brand.

[SLIDE]<sup>8</sup>

So you can read the translation. [*Laughter in the audience*] And even when it comes to the political opponent, to the enemies, you don't cross a certain line. There were of course other types of jokes, but they were not very prominent and they were not very popular.

[SLIDE]<sup>9</sup>

This again refers to the cultural copying of things and then posting them online. This is what many people did. This was a very popular photo. It was shared a lot at the Oscar nomination and this was replicated by a lot of participants.

[SLIDE]<sup>10</sup>

So this was again [*laughter in the audience*] about the violence... and this is maybe something that is on the border of... mocking the political opponent, but at the same time, it shows also something about another capacity of humor: in the situation, it allows you and it helps you in a certain situation... to maintain... or to survive hardships or... it helps you to overcome maybe your doubts about what you're actually doing there.

[SLIDE]<sup>11</sup>

I like this one the most. This refers to a culture. Everybody might have experienced this once with their families, but when you talk to your

family about what you are doing... and this is something, where it shows a lot, that there is one element there... about the typical people, who are going to this kind of events, it's always the same people "die üblichen Verdächtigen". But at the same time, it's more than that, and I think this reflects that there were kinds of people, types of people participating in the Gezi uprising that were actually not the typical participants.

So this is one of the elements that I've wanted to focus on today as a practice that allows you to assemble and to make an assembly work together with a certain level of diversity and with a certain level of tension between yourself and other groups within such an assembly. But, also I think, humor made you open, made the situation and the space open for other people to participate through such statements that showed that the code - the necessary code to participate - is an open code. It is a kind of joke everybody can understand and everybody can relate to in a certain way; it's not an insider joke, it's not insider fun. It's the kind of fun that tells you "Okay, this is something, where it's not only about the members of that party or that movement that are typically participating, and I might also be part of this."

So, when we did interviews with a lot of people at the Gezi Park, what we heard was - other people did more representative studies later - it was clear that most people, the vast majority of people that went there, never went to a demonstration before in their lives, which I find a very interesting result. I have to come to an end, I have a lot of other things to say but just one more thing at the end. When I said, it was ages ago, it kind of relates to that fantastic moment that really seemed to have disappeared very fast. And you would ask yourself now: What is the result? Is it sustainable? Is it just a fire and it doesn't have any consequences? But if you look at the last six years, I would say, it has had an impact on a lot of levels and, I would say, mainly, it translated into the opposition parties and eventually in the victory of Ekrem İmamoğlu, the new mayor of Istanbul. When you look at his attitude and the way he did his campaign and who is behind the campaign, who runs the campaign in Istanbul, the CHP the people, who are doing his campaign, and the slogan that he uses; that kind of reflects the same, or is close, or has a familiar relationship to that attitude of Gezi Park. The slogan of Ekrem İmamoğlu, that was very popular, came from a kid, actually. A kid that said to him: "Hey Ekrem, everything will be very good." Everything will be good. Alles wird gut werden. Her şey çok güzel olacak. And that became his winning slogan and that references the spirit of openness, the spirit of non-contradiction, non-polarization. So that's it. Thank you.

#01:14:18-9#

[Applause]

#01:14:18-9#

#01:14:28-1#

Irina: Thank you, Serhat, for this really interesting presentation. Maybe we will try to open up the conversation right away, immediately. We have now about half an hour. We can also extend maybe to 12:45, because we started a bit later, before lunch break. Are there already any questions, comments arising? Otherwise, maybe, I will try to bridge between the two presentations, which is easy because you related to each other in a lot of ways. What I find interesting... maybe we can also, in terms of assembling and disseminating, talk about the infrastructures in 'real life' like the assembly in the Gezi Park and the specialty and the infrastructures that are provided online. Because on the one hand, we heard from Serhat about the importance of a feeling to participate, to have a nice atmosphere, exciting atmosphere and humor as an important factor in this by being an open code, where you don't need to have any literacy, references or capabilities, techniques to understand it and participate. And on the other hand, Noel and Björn, you shared your experience about the necessity to understand references in a lot of jokes occurring through memes... the distribution there. We have also - which came out really nicely - the lineage or the tradition between the

dissemination practices of posters, flyers, taggings and meme culture... that it is not a new phenomenon as such. And also, this conflict between identity cultures on platforms, like the example you made with *weird Facebook* - to use it the way it is not intended to, to use it anonymously, to cause confusion by misinformation somehow. But also the keyword "meme war", which is a lot about identities or opinions, world views clashing, coming through, being articulated in the memes. And on the other hand, Serhat, as you have focused, on the 'spirit of Gezi' which is about the recomposition of groups that have opposite political opinions, but come together, work together, share the same place and food and take care of each other. How would you respond to each other in terms of these infrastructures? And also on the part of humor and jokes, the differentiation that Serhat put up?

#01:18:24-2#

#01:18:26-9#

Noel: So there are - I will try to keep it short - there are at least three aspects, I would like to address. One is the aspect that Irina already mentioned, the analogy and differences between the two topics. For sure there is a very strong analogy with regards to - let's call it - necessity, the means you use to organize difference and complexity as Serhat also mentioned. So I think both, the graffiti that we saw and the memes that we showed, are a way to enable agency for communities that are very heterogeneous and are not organized in any formal way. So they act like signals and that is something that memes get often accused of - of simplifying very complex topics, of being superficial. That is one of the most recurrent accusations you hear about memes; that they are not effective as political means, because they tend to oversimplify positions and ideas, which are actually very complex. But I think this... just misses the point. Because the point is actually to first enable people just to organize and to interact and in this regard, memes and graffiti are very effective. And so I come to the second point, we are talking about a space, I think - both, the digital and the real urban space, both can be seen in terms of space. And actually a feed, a social media feed is often also called a wall. Of course there is the main, the very big difference that one side we have a space that, at least in events like Gezi or Occupy and so one, can be reappropriated. I mean Occupy is an excellent example of a private space that was occupied for a short moment and this... changed the status of that space. It shifted, although it still was... a private space; but as long as the occupation went on, it was working by different rules. Something similar, I would argue, happens with social media platforms: they're privatized or corporate spaces. They are highly controlled of course, but what happens with the *weird Facebook* and the *weird Tumbler* and so on, what these subcultures show... and what I think many like the generation of activists that were raised in the '90s is often... They mistrust these platforms a lot, while the younger generations are very eager to act on these platforms. And this is something that we experience - that there is quite a rift between older activists, digital activists and the younger ones. For example older activists and media theorists, they have a strong refusal to even open a Facebook profile; they would never do that. While many younger activists, they know about all the issues with Facebook, but at the sametime they argue that to opt out of Facebook, is not really an option. Because it's just a field that it's just too important to us. But at the same time, of course, you have to be conscious of the risk that it is a controlled and privatized space. But at the same time, there are processes and things going on there, that can be put under the label 'commoning', which is the same that we can see at Gezi and Occupy. And the third aspect - and then I would hand on - is the subculture/ mainstream aspect and the aspect of political co-optation that was mentioned. So I think, this is very interesting what Serhat mentioned, that this slogan was picked up on. In a way this reminded me of how Trump co-opted the alt-right. I mean the shift, the change, was really when Trump posted a meme from a very fringe group, showing Pepe the frog - maybe some of you know it - which was made to look like Trump and he shared this on his official Twitter profile. And this was huge, because then it was picked up by Hillary Clinton, who denounced Pepe as a

hate symbol and said basically that posting a Pepe is the same as posting a Swastika. Which was completely missing the point of how the subcultures were working and what they were about.



Fig. 11.  
Illustrating the appropriation of the character Pepe  
Part of Clusterduck's slide presentation

So I think we have examples. Corbin is another good example. We have "Millennium", one of the grassroots movements that was backing Corbin in the election last year. You could really see from the memes on Twitter that Corbin was gonna win, because I think the people working for him - probably not himself, but the people working for him, the people from Millennium - were good at co-opting in a constructive way and that was coming from this grassroots movement. And I think this is really what political movements have to learn. And I think these movements can by themselves substitute a party or establish political movements, form political movements or parties or so on. It's important to understand the interactions between these two aspects and that political actors - progressive political actors in particular - learn how to constructively pick up the inputs that come from these communities and incorporate them into their own message in a constructive and positive way.

#01:24:24-4#

#01:24:37-3#

Audience member: Thank you both for the presentations. A question occurred to me in the first presentation about left memes or right memes and which ones are more successful... and web pages such as "the left can't meme". So I have the question: is there an example of left memes? And then Serhat made this presentation that was full of left memes, which were... because my question is... I doubt the dominance of the image and that it narrows down thinking. So this is the position where I come from as a visual artist, ironically. But then thinking about these memes that were all taken from concrete specific sites - they were graffiti on the walls, they had context, they had an embodied context. This has to do with the reason why I find them not narrow in contrast to other memes, which are created more synthetically maybe... or where this subtleness of layers... Is it a contradiction to have subtle memes? Or to have this kind of: mind-expanding?... Because the memes go back to, in the way I see it, to John Heartfield, which is a left tradition. But maybe... that's like 100 years ago. So what is the left agitation method today? Maybe these are a lot of questions, but I just send them to you... however you might want to respond.

#01:26:23-6#

#01:26:25-7#

Noel: I would handover to Björn, I just want to say one thing: Actually this whole reflection, a lot of the things you said, were part of the brainstorming and the ideas, the discussion that we had before starting #MEMEPROPAGANDA. I mean, one of the things that started it was of course the Trump election, but also “the left can’t meme”. It is a meme in itself. It’s a very popular meme, which states that the right is better at making memes and is more effective in communicating because the right memes are just simpler and people get it. And the left memes always try to be brainy and complicated and intellectual and so people don’t get it. And we can’t agree with this interpretation and this is what we were trying to demonstrate with the initiative and I would say there are lots of good examples of left memes. But I think one aspect is, for example, that we reflected with the #MEMEPROPAGANDA was the role of meme characters. I think this is somehow related to, if you want, something like... totemism, because basically these characters become a totem. Pepe clearly, he represents, he embodies certain aspects of digital subculture, which are not inherently rightist aspects. He is more like something of a trickster. He can be anything. He can be left, he can be right. So the left also tried to re-take Pepe back from the rightwing activists and what happened then, and one of the reasons why we did #MEMEPROPAGANDA was, because we were trying to see, if it was possible to create something like a left meme character that would be a response to Pepe. And of course this is not possible in vitro. So our back door, our way to escape this conundrum was just to say “it is an artistic action” [ *laughs*]. So we can legitimate doing it in that way. But we were discussing a lot, the contradictions of what we did. What actually happened is that... Gritty - I don’t know how many people know Gritty. He is a meme character that was born last year during the midterm election and he is actually a mascot of the Philadelphia basketball team and he got picked up by the leftist activists in the States as an anti-Pepe. But I would say he has a very strong disadvantage towards Pepe, because he can only be leftist and he can only be very bad and violent against fascist. That’s basically the biography of this character. All the memes about him are like kicking rightwing figures’ ass, really killing them, torturing them. He is really blood thirsty. But I see him as a totem, as an incarnation of this rage and frustration of certain areas of the left. This feeling of impotence. And he perfectly incarnated this desire to retaliate at the enemy somehow, to get back at these perceived defeats of the past years.

#01:29:53-4#

#01:29:52-0#

#01:29:52-2#

Björn: Also the different memes are just tools, I would say. And this tool can be used from both directions. So the tool itself does not have - [*Unintelligible/inaudible voices from the audience*] - if it is like that or not that is something that needs to be discussed. I think, of course it can have something implemented to... it can have history. So over time, Pepe is now seen more as a rightwing meme, but that is not from where it originally came. And I think that comes from people owning those places, trying to take them over, trying to make them their own, and make this totem speak for their voices that they put on to them... Like using these templates to say what they want to say and put it into another group and act like this group is actually saying it. And this is a big topic in the whole “meme war”, because things just get taken over. A lot of people get played against each other. For example, leftwing people taking over the rightwing people’s meme again, then using rightwing language to make a joke about the rightwing... and this is so hard to boil down and...



Fig. 12.  
 Panel with Noel David Nicolaus, Björn Heerssen, Serhat Karakayali  
 Photo: Maximilian Haas. Courtesy: DFG-Graduiertenkolleg “Das Wissen  
 der Künste”

#01:31:23-9#

#01:31:24-3#

Noel: [*unintelligible/inaudible*] One very fast thing on this aspect of if it is inherently rightwing. I would just say, it reminds me of Adorno, who was very skeptical about modern media like cinema for example or television. I would say, it's the same thing. Now, we have this assumption that social media and memes give advantage to rightwing positions, conservative positions. I would say, it is not inherently like that. This has more to do with the narratives. At the moment the right just has the more effective narratives, the narratives that work better with this kind of media, but it is not that they are inherently better at using them.

#01:32:07-1#

#01:32:19-6#

Audience member: Okay, I hope to... do you hear me?... I hope to connect to the last point and try to pin down my question. So, I mean in these two presentations, I think, you showed pretty well how fine the line between propaganda and subcultural communication via memes and graffiti and tagging can be. Because it can be also picked up by the other side, whoever the other side is. And I mean even with İmamoğlu it's really interesting that he is picking up what a child said, and the slogan for itself could be also the slogan for the AKP, I think. So against this background, I asked myself, would you say that this kind of passing on of messages and developing them together by repeating them and changing them - is that collective practice per se? Or isn't it also a practice of propaganda? And I mean both of you were also referring to propaganda aesthetics. So I think... it seems like at every moment it can shift into the other thing and my question would be, which role would you assign to the arts or to broader aesthetic strategies? Also in Gezi a lot of artists were involved. But both environments that you described - meme culture and Gezi - they are also more, they are broader than just the art

world, and I think it's also really interesting to see how on the level... or on the question of how democratic the use of aesthetics may be... different things and actors come together in that.

#01:34:51-6#

[Inaudible]

#01:35:00-8#

Audience member: Thanks for your inputs. So I was wondering a bit about the sort of temporality or longevity of these activist modes of dissemination and assembly. Like, how do you archive memes? Or how do you archive infrastructures and affects, experiences of assembling? Debatably, the internet might be a democratic place to store information - obviously not - but maybe you can speak to that. But since you both talked about practices of sharing information, getting them out there, now, I would be curious to know, how do we, in the long term, learn about these practices and moments in time with regards to archiving them? Thanks.

#01:35:50-1#

#01:35:55-4#

Irina: Serhat, would you like to start?

#01:36:00-9#

#01:36:04-4#

Serhat: I was thinking about the question: Can it be co-opted or what does it actually mean to co-opt something? And to think of... all of us come up with this reference to the mechanisms of how these movements are translated into institutional settings. That's often the communication team, the strategy or whatever team of candidates, of political figures, and the idea or the thing of the democratic candidate... And I think the idea is not new in the sense of, how do I relate to the people, what kind of means do I have?... and as a society, to translate the desires, the interest or what people actually want or express at a given moment into organizations, into institutions or into parties. What's the mechanism? And we have formal mechanisms - such as the very, very formalized process of electing representatives etc. ...then voting on certain stuff. But there are other mechanisms as well. And one of those mechanisms is, I think, the one that played a role in our two presentations: to pick up on movements and to get the spirit of them. Too often that takes the form of hiring people from such backgrounds as speechwriters or people, who do your social media campaign. And then you have to ask: what is translated? What gets missed in a translation? And, what is mistranslated? If you want. If this is only about the form, if this is only about being funny, if this is only about copying the spirit, but going along with the same policies, then you might be critical about that. And then also, people will react to that. I think people, who feel that they are being sold something - I mean you can see that in advertisements, that's also a commercial strategy to pick up on this thing to sell products by tagging them with the spirit of these events. Because it's a powerful, emotional thing that makes you wanna buy stuff, because it says revolution on it. I mean, I see a lot of places who do that - from little shops to big companies - who kind of tried to benefit from that experience. The question is, can they get away with that? I guess, I would say no. I would say, as a communication team, you should be wise enough and smart enough to understand that this will backfire on you. So this is the one thing. And the other thing is, how can you archive? When you said archive, I was like: "why would you archive?" I mean, on the one hand, you're right, it's always like this, when you look at historical events - I mean, I have thought a lot of about this with anti-colonial movements, or the Black Power movement and anti-racist movements in the past - And when you look at them, you're like: "Why do we not know about this? And why does everyone have to think, they are inventing all the stuff from scratch, while a lot of people have gone through this



experience a while ago?" I don't know how to archive things, but this should be done, I think. And this should be set up so that we transfer the knowledge about these historical experiences. Often this is done by people, who have done so. And I think for example about the movie *Pride*. I mean, a lot of people have heard about it or watched it. I was like totally surprised at the end of the movie to see that it's a true story about gays and lesbians for the miners. A group of people, who went to the communities of miners and supported them with their struggle in London in the 80's. And this was one of those... what kind of an encounter is this? How do they deal with each other? And the film is very funny, but at the end I was in tears. When you see at the end that it has actually happened and it had the impact that Labor Party actually changed their policy on the homosexual paragraph. And then you are like: "Why do we not know about this?" When you look for that event, you will find some websites where people have documented all the historical archive material. People have made a film, 20 or 30 years ago, and these people are actually still there. So the archive is there. There is an archive. But I don't know, I didn't know about it until I watched the movie. So my point is to say that there are these experiences and even when they are archived, they are not disseminated. And when you do political activism, that's your job then, to disseminate the knowledge and to look for those things and to tell these stories, that people did this in the past, and it had that impact, and we can learn from that.

#01:42:02-5#

[Applause]

#01:42:12-6#

#01:42:08-8#

Björn: I wanted to just add that in memes, personally for me, archiving that stuff happens just through my download folder. Like, I actually just download the picture that I like, so it gets narrated by myself. So there is this part. But there are a lot of people really dedicated to that stuff. For memes it is *knowyourmeme.com*. There is this one guy. He has a giant archive, where he tries to figure out what's the format, what's the history of it, where did it come from, how do people interact with it. And then he has an open folder, where people can just upload all their versions of that meme. If you want to interact with that, I can highly recommend it, because it's a good platform to see. It's a huge amount of content and you really have to dig through that stuff - actually, in my opinion - and at least it's there. People are doing this great service, so it's really nice. And about the corporate thing - of corporates using for example 'revolution': I just wanted to add that Pepsi had that beautiful TV commercial with a woman drinking Pepsi in a campaign and they were like "oh freedom, yeah" and it backfired so hard. Everyone hated it and for a reason, because you can't own topics really well that you are not part of; because you have to find the right template to use your voice, to speak through the template to the people in the right way. And if there is one little thing, like corporate identity, if there is one little thing wrong, people notice and it becomes directly: not real, fake, put on to you, and it feels really corporate. And the thing dies instantly, because people are just like "that's shit". And people agree because they realize they have a feeling for it. You feel, if something is real or not, and then it dies. And this is good, it's a good thing. [laughs]

#01:44:28-6#

#01:44:28-7#

Irina: And maybe you could answer the question about the relation to arts that was also posed...

#01:44:37-1#

[unintelligible voices from the audience]

#01:44:50-2# Just to know a bit the structure of our conversation,

because afterwards we have our last question and then sum it up and go to lunch.

#01:45:01-6#



Fig. 13.

View into the audience during the round table

Photo: Irina Raskin. Courtesy: DFG-Graduiertenkolleg "Das Wissen der Künste"

#01:45:05-1#

Noel: So just on that aspect of co-optation: Actually, what we see with memes... I think, the initial attitude was: "Okay, there is this new popular thing amongst young people and we want to get some of that." So they hired agencies or whatever to copy the idea. And this was recognized as fake very fast and backfired. But what happened in the meantime is that the subculture is big enough that there are people sustaining carriers from this: They are professional memers - you could call them that way. They have very big profiles and of course these people don't have issues with getting hired by brands. And they know the rules of the subculture. Actually, they are that thing. They are not faking it, they are a part of the subculture. And that's what I think, Trump was also, and is, always very good at doing. He is always giving these small signals to the core of the people, who are really strongly behind him. No matter what, they will, this 30 percent will always stick with him, no matter what he does. And he is always very good at picking up all the small signals and codes, and images and incorporating them in his behavior and in his message. And I think that's the point. It's not that you have to ask someone to do it for you, to copy that, you actually have to pick the real thing and put it where it is visible somehow. And that is different from this kind of... appropriation... Maybe also co-optation is not the right word, I don't know... [inaudible]... incorporation?... yeah, but it's more like making the subculture feel that they are organically part of what is going on and they are being recognized as valuable and important to the political event that is going on. And the left has been much worse at this. Especially so called central left parties, social-democratic parties... they just didn't manage to understand the codes by which these mechanisms work. Not all of them, but most of the actors in this field. And regarding the art scene - that is at least talking about the meme scene, but I think also graffities could be a good case. I think

about street artists like Banksy, who is always seen as someone spreading certain political messages. But he's always being really good at tipping at the topic that is just the hot topic of the moment and incorporating into his self-marketing action, into the self-marketing of his artist persona. And the same thing, I think, we see with memes. We see the subculture, but then we see some people, who are building careers out of this. And then we are seeing even some people, who can be just defined as artists. What they do is art with memes. I still feel that this is a very contested field. It's still not clear how it will develop. And I also think one has to differentiate between the art system in a wider sense and the white cubes - so the institutions of the art world, the gatekeepers where the money is and the museums and galleries and so on - and I think there is a big difference between these two. But I don't think we have time to go into that. [Laughs]

#01:48:55-1#

Irina [*from the distance*]: One more question.

#01:48:55-2#

Audience member: Thank you very much for your talks. I would like to ask you about the notion of template that you have brought up in your talk, but it is, I guess, relevant for both talks, because both talks basically made use of the concept. So what makes a good template? Like the sentence about Atatürk, you gave us as an example, but also the memes you showed us. So how does a template negotiate repetition and difference? And how do you recognize a good template? Because the last memes I saw, I was really surprised how they were extracted. Like they come from a music video or they come from a quote or they come from a TV show and it's hard for me to imagine the aesthetic process of seeing and perceiving the original artwork or context of communication and then being able to extract the template and reconfigure it. So maybe you can say a bit more about that kind of aesthetic practice.

#01:50:10-8#

#01:50:10-8#

Björn: For me, it always starts when something tingles my mind in a wider sense. For example, I watch a movie and then there is this one scene, where someone hits someone else. And if I just take this moment and take it out of context, I can look at it and be like: "Okay, what happens?" And then you have two people, one person hitting the other. So I can use this mechanism, like one bashing the other, and put everything on to it. And just use this picture, use the message of the moment to communicate what I want to say actually. So in this case, I could take me and Nazis and then I'm like hitting the Nazis and then I'm just writing over it and this would make a template that would work for all the people that watched the movie, also wanting to bash Nazis, and that know me because I'm the figurine that interacts with it. And this is the general way of how templates are built in my opinion. But what makes a good template, that is really hard to define. It has to - I don't know - to talk to as many people as possible. It has to have a lot of referential points. For example, for my generation it's SpongeBob memes. Everyone watched SpongeBob in my generation and that works for everyone, because everyone knows SpongeBob, everyone knows the one scene, where he does a certain thing that's how you can have a feeling, when you see it, because it tingles somewhere in your mind, and your like: "Oh, yeah, I remember it." And that kind of defines it for me.

#01:51:43-6#

#01:51:44-1#

Serhat: Some of the memes that you showed have that progressive structure. So there's a narration involved in the structure. So one is from normal state to explosion. And there is this other one, where there is this couple and the guy looks back at the other woman. And this is also very popular, I have seen this in dozens of versions. And the images

that are used here, I guess, are not part of anything that could be seen as popular culture as SpongeBob is. You don't have to know the images that are used. You don't have to know the context. They are very generic images. And I think this is another type of template which is as generic as it can be, in the sense of, you don't have to be involved, immersed in this kind of cartoon movies. But it really is so simple that everybody can relate to it. These are the ones that everyone can relate to. These are the ones, I see the most often, actually.

#01:53:04-5#

#01:53:04-8#

Björn: Just really shortly, I think the word you brought up is the right: to relate. What makes a successful meme is that it is relatable and that's also when a political message is successful, when it is relatable, so that people can identify with that and through this a collectivity is built somehow.

#01:53:24-6#

#01:53:30-6#

Irina: Maybe we can take the conversation into the lunch break, where there is a lot of food prepared for us to relate to. Just a short announcement: we will meet afterwards at 2pm for the workshops. They will take place in parallel. So, here will be the workshop with AWO Theaterlinge. Pêdra Costa's *cooking sharing playing* will be a bit disseminated in the area behind that wall, but also on the outside. And then there is another room called "cabinet" - behind this wall... left from the toilets, where the workshop with Clusterduck will be. And maybe, there is also the possibility, I guess, to continue this conversation here. So thank you, Serhat, Björn and Noel. And also all of you guys. And one more thing: most of the chairs are now here, so if we go to the workshops, you can just grab a chair from here, bring in to the space and afterwards bring it back.

#01:54:55-2#

[Applause]

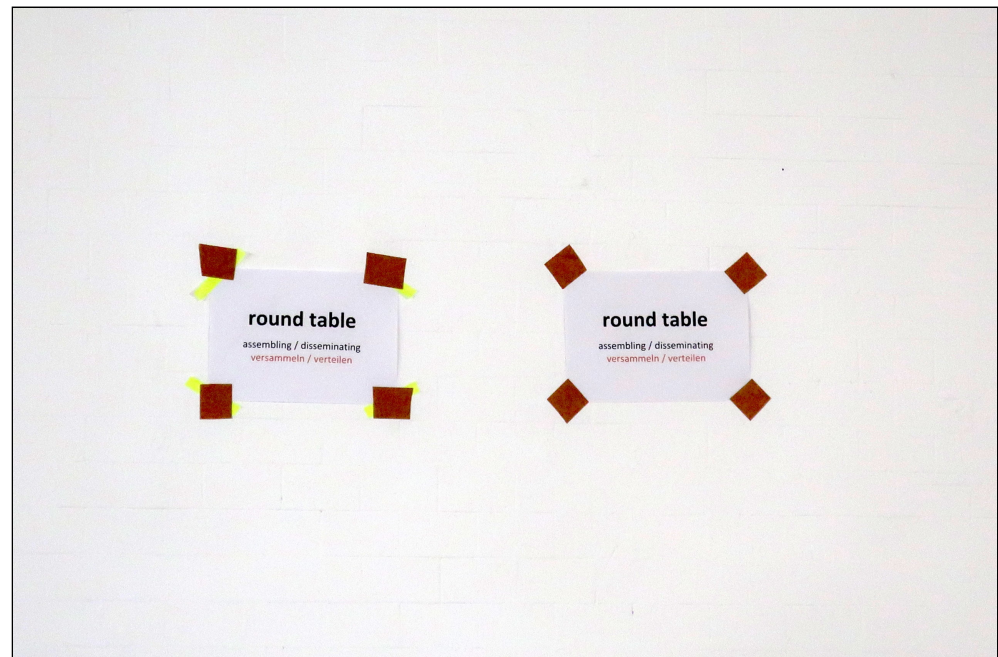


Fig. 14.

Program announcement

Photo: Maximilian Haas. Courtesy: DFG-Graduiertenkolleg "Das Wissen der Künste"



- 1 Meme showing a scene from the movie Pulp Fiction, where Jules Winnfield (played by Samuel L. Jackson) targets a gun at someone outside of the picture's frame. The meme-like inscription in white bold letters states "SAY "\*\*\*\*\*" ONE MORE TIME" on the top of the image and "I DARE YA, I DOUBLE DARE YA MOTHERFUCKER" at the bottom.
- 2 A group of three young persons chanting or shouting (this is not determinable) hold a black banner, on which following caption appears in bold lettering "YASAK NE AYOL !" [What is forbidden.] Behind them is a crowd of people some raising LGBTQ flags/rainbow flags.
- 3 Photo showing a young woman holding an open box and offering food to police officers, who seem to take a break. Two of the four officers are wearing bulletproof vests. One policeman reaches out with one hand into the box and holds in the other a high caliber weapon, which he turns away, resting its barrel on his shoulder. In the background, two persons sit on the pavement. It is not clear whether they are part of the police or the protesters. The mimic and gestures of all the people depicted on the image indicate a relaxed atmosphere.
- 4 Photo of a house wall on which has been written with black spray paint: "MUSTAFA KESER İN ASKERLERİYİZ." [We are the soldiers of Mustafa Keser.] Above and beneath the writing there can be seen parts of large windows secured with bars.
- 5 Close-up of the writing "biber gaz, sikaniza gerek yoktu bayım, zaten yeterince duygusal çocuk loriz!" [Wasn't necessary to spray tear gas, we are already emotional kids!] The text has been written in black or dark blue felt-tip pen, on a light surface. It is not recognizable what surface it is.
- 6 "Revolution Party! Tüm halkımız davetlidir (Pilavlı)" [Everybody is invited (with Pilav)] written in black spray paint on two large wooden boards fixed to a fence or a facade on the side of the pavement.
- 7 Centered at the top, a white street sign of the make-up chainstore MAC. Underneath, on the closed rolling protection door appears "BİBER GAZI CİLDİ GÜZELLİSTİRIR :)" [Pepper spray beautifies the skin (smily face)] which has been applied in neon orange spray paint.
- 8 Shot of the writing "ekmek yoksa biber gazı yesinler - Recep Tayyip Antoinette" [If there's no bread, let them eat tear gas - (signed by) Recep Tayyip Antoinette] applied in black spray paint and large letters on the bright, orange front wall of a house.
- 9 Slide showing two images: on the top left, a selfie of a group of smiling and cheering Hollywood celebrities gathering closely in front of the lense; on the bottom right, a screenshot of a Twitter post, including a selfie of a group of smiling (and cheering) protesters gathering closely in front of the lense, accompanied by the heading "Selfie dediğin polis otosunda gözaltındayken çekilir (7 Mart) pic.twitter.com/oc5Lit3Zlz" [What you call a selfie is taken when you're in custody in the police car].
- 10 Photo shot of a tagging in green color stating "3 GÜNDÜR YIKANMIYORUZ TOMA GÖNDERİN" [No washing since 3 days, send a water cannon]. It is not recognizable on what kind of surface the text is written, but it is applied next to other tags and graffiti, of which only fragments are visible.
- 11 Photo taken in the middle of a crowd of casually dressed protesters, of whom some are raising flags of Turkey or protest signs. Prominently in the center, a person while wearing a gas mask shows his sign to the camera. On the cardboard sign can be read "MERAK Etme ANNE, önden gitmiyorum, hep BERABER yürüyoruz" [Don't worry mum, I don't walk in the front row, we all walk together].